

The Ballad Of

John Reginald Halliday

Christie (1898-1953)

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Before that wicked lady
Hindley and her chum Brady,
Before the Yorkshire Ripper and his kind,
There was a strange old fellow
Whose ways were quiet and mellow,
The last man you would think would blow your mind.

Hello, my name is Reg,
And I'm over the edge,
That's me I was referring to, my friend,
Deceived the world, did I,
'Tis no word of a lie,
I kept my secrets right up to the end.

Where did it all begin,
This life as black as sin?
Near Halifax in eighteen-ninety-eight;
I was a bright young spark,
But not much of a lark,
And had no aspirations to be great.

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Okay, well to be sure,
I lied about the War,
Though I did have a bad time in the trenches,
But see the other side,
Like you I've got my pride,
All men tell stories to impress the wenches.

My darling wife, dear Eth',
I loved her to the death,
For thirty years and more we two were spliced,
True, we were parted for
A while 'fore the last war,
And we had altercations once or twice.

But don't all married folk?
Why, it's a standing joke
That spouses often come to words and blows,
Though as the years go by
They see more eye to eye,
As youthful passion wanes, a deep love grows.

That's what I had with Eth',
And till my final breath
I thought of her, not of those tramps and whores
Who edged and lured me on
Until my mind was gone;
They had it coming, rotten to their cores.

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The first, her name was Ruth,
A student nurse in truth,
But all the same a dirty little bitch,
In Summer forty-three
This lassie came to me,
And after her I really got the itch.

The second (so they say)
In forty-four one day,
A spinster - how respectable we are!
But not in rude good health,
I lured her here by stealth,
I said I would (and did!) cure her catarrh.

Nine years on and my wife,
Bane and love of my life
Lay strangled underneath the front room floor;
A harlot then a slag,
And then some Scottish hag,
Ten years on and that took to six the score.

Some folk say there were others,
Expectant single mothers
I picked up when I served with the police,
That I performed abortions,
But these are gross distortions;
I did my duty keeping the King's Peace.

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Most controversial though
As I'm sure you well know
Are murders blamed on my Welsh neighbour Tim;
His daughter Geraldine,
And his wife, slain real mean;
Tim fingered me but Pierrepont fingered him!

They hanged him for the baby,
He killed his wife too, maybe,
They said, but when the bodies in my garden
And underneath the floor
Were found, they weren't so sure;
Belatedly they granted him a pardon.

They quizzed me about Beryl,
My life in direst peril,
I could escape the rope if I were mad,
I said I thought I did it,
Her body, young Tim hid it,
And that he'd killed the baby, well, he had...

Or hadn't he? Who knows?
The mystery still grows,
Forty years on and more the questions linger,
For Tim was thick as shit,
Though he confessed to it
First off, sly old Reg wrapped him round his finger.

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How many did I slay?
I really cannot say,
I know I did my wife and several more,
Perhaps it was all eight;
My mind's in such a state
That though I concentrate, I can't be sure.

My IQ, one-two-eight,
Could never compensate
For my poor health and mental aberration,
For though my ego swells,
I have these dizzy spells,
It's quite an indescribable sensation.

It was in fifty-three
I went to Tyburn Tree,
Well, Pentonville to be precise, and so
Another killer vile
And shameless necrophile
Went down to burn eternally below.

But though I roast in Hell,
And though I didn't tell
The full account of all my wicked crimes,
My ghost still walks the streets,
And every year repeats
My untold horrors in these awful times.

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You've heard of old Fred West
And others who attest
To how he murdered with impunity,
And got away for years -
A young girl disappears,
Another victim of a killing spree.

Then there was Jeffrey Dahmer,
Ted Bundy - a real charmer,
And Nilsen, such a quiet and harmless type;
You'd pass them in the street,
Innocuous, discreet,
Fiends seldom look like fiends, ignore the hype.

For naught more than a thrill
They mutilate and kill.
Their victims they abuse, deface, defile,
They kill for lust and leisure,
Or simply for the pleasure,
They do it with a shrug or with a smile.

So next time you walk by
Some nondescript old guy,
Think: you could be the answer to his prayers.
Best watch your back, my dear,
Though he may not act queer,
Don't be deceived by gentle folk upstairs.

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**And take care whom you trust,
For my perverted lust
Lives on: behind those closed suburban doors
A thousand Christies lurk,
And do their evil work,
And the next corpse that turns up could be yours!**

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